

**CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION**

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California Coastal Commission  
**Public Review Announcement:**  
**Draft Sea-level Rise Policy Guidance**  
October 14, 2013

**A Call to Action on Climate Change**

- Governor Brown has issued a “call to action” on climate change, including planning for the impacts of global sea-level rise (<http://gov.ca.gov/news.php?id=18065>).
- In support of this call, the California Coastal Commission is releasing draft proposed *Sea-Level Rise Guidance* for California’s coastal communities. Our coastline is facing increased risks to coastal development, critical infrastructure, and recreational beach resources due to accelerated shoreline erosion, coastal flooding and extreme storm events.
- The draft guidance will be available for public review and comment for at least 90 days, including at public hearings yet to be scheduled. It will be considered for formal endorsement by the Coastal Commission next Spring. Public comments may be sent to [SLRGuidanceDocument@coastal.ca.gov](mailto:SLRGuidanceDocument@coastal.ca.gov).

**Protecting Economy and Environment through Effective Planning**

- The California Coastal Commission and local governments play a critically important role planning for and managing coastal development in California.
- Under the Coastal Act, each of the 76 local governments along California’s coast (excluding SF Bay) must prepare a Local Coastal Program (LCP) to implement state coastal policies, including to minimize hazard risks to new coastal development and to protect and provide public access to California’s coastal environment on behalf of all Californians.
- The Commission’s draft sea-level guidance is a comprehensive resource to help coastal communities prepare for the challenges of sea-level rise through effective planning and management of coastal development.
- The guidance proposes a framework to help local governments update their LCPs to address sea-level rise. It also contains technical assistance for helping the development

community avoid and minimize coastal hazard risks to new development while continuing to protect important coastal resources, such as local public beaches and scenic natural shorelines.

## **Using Best Science and Risk Management to Protect the Coast**

- The Commission’s draft guidance recommends using the best available science on global sea-level rise to plan for and protect community coastal development and resources at the local level. Experts currently project that sea level may rise by as much as 65 inches by 2100 south of Cape Mendocino (56 inches to the north).
- Rising seas will accelerate coastal bluff and beach erosion, increase coastal flooding, and lead to stronger, more extreme coastal storm events. These coastal hazards will dramatically increase risks to important community development, infrastructure, public beaches and recreation areas, sensitive coastal wetlands and other natural shoreline resources.
- The Commission’s draft guidance recommends that communities update their LCPs with risk assessments and policies to better manage the anticipated increased coastal hazard risks due to sea-level rise.
- Updated local coastal planning and a risk management approach will help protect development and infrastructure and avoid or minimize impacts to coastal shoreline resources from unplanned and ad hoc hazard response (such as covering public recreational beaches with poorly designed, emergency rock revetments).

## **Minimizing Risk and Protecting Resources through Adaptive Management**

- Specific draft guidance principles include:
  - ✓ Avoid where feasible and minimize coastal hazard risks over the life of authorized developments through smart project siting and design.
  - ✓ Account for the social and economic needs of the people of the state and assure priority for coastal-dependent and coastal-related development over other development.
  - ✓ Avoid and minimize the adverse impacts of necessary hazard responses such as seawalls on public beach access and other sensitive shoreline resources, while protecting private property rights.
  - ✓ Assure that the potential future costs and impacts to public shoreline resources from new development in hazardous areas are accounted for by the proposed development.
  - ✓ Use adaptive planning measures and policies that better protect public beaches and natural shoreline processes, through “living shorelines” and “green

infrastructure” and policies and incentives for long-term planned or managed retreat from hazard zones.

- ✓ Coordinate planning and regulatory decision making with other state, local, and federal agencies involved in shoreline and coastal management. Support regional or sub-regional collaborative planning efforts.
- ✓ Maximize public participation in planning and regulatory processes.

## Specific Proposed Policy Guidance

- The draft guidance synthesizes and recommends that all local governments and development proposals follow current Coastal Commission implementation of existing state law to address coastal hazards that closely regulates both new development in hazard zones and the proposed construction of seawalls and other shoreline protective measures including:
  - ✓ Assure that the siting and design of *new* development minimizes coastal hazard risks over its projected lifetime without the use of bluff retaining or shoreline protection devices that would substantially alter natural landforms along coastal bluffs and cliffs.
  - ✓ Require that new development in hazardous shoreline areas record a “no future seawall” condition to assure compliance with state law over the life of the development and include provisions to ensure structures are modified, relocated, or removed when they become threatened by natural hazards.
  - ✓ Limit the construction of new shoreline structures to those necessary to protect *existing* development for its foreseeable life or public beaches in danger from erosion, consistent with state law.
  - ✓ Limit redevelopment in hazardous areas to not increase non-conforming uses and provide for the eventual conversion of existing development to conforming uses.
  - ✓ Minimize the environmental impacts of necessary shoreline structure development including by reducing beach encroachment and using designs that mimic natural shoreline features.
  - ✓ Avoid or minimize the impacts of necessary shoreline structure on public beach access and recreation.
  - ✓ Require that the unavoidable impacts of shoreline structures on public access, beaches, and other public trust coastal resources be fully mitigated in kind or with in-lieu fees.